



Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN M. Le MOYNE Chief of Infantry

CLOSING RANKS FOR A STRONGER INFANTRY

The spearhead for the Army's transformation to the Objective Force will be the two Infantry brigades at Fort Lewis. The great soldiers in these brigades, and in the brigades to follow, will blaze a trail that takes us to the limits of our imagination with regard to maneuver and the application of combat power. Every possible capability of these organizations is being scrutinized and retooled—equipment, training management, organization, etc. Infantry noncommissioned officers (NCOs) will be at the marrow of these brigades, today and in the year 2030.

Today's Infantrymen in MOSs 11B, 11C, 11M, and 11H bring to the transformation the very best that our distinct light, mechanized, antiarmor, and indirect fire cultures—all Infantry subcultures—have to offer. Slowly, they will shape an Infantry bound by common values, skills, and a shared sense of identity. They will share a common understanding and application of firepower. They will live, train, and fight as combined arms warriors and leaders. The two brigades at Fort Lewis have already set this in motion, with great success.

Consistent with that vision, the Infantry Center is pursuing an initiative to transform our great infantry noncommissioned officer corps to be ready for the future force. Today our legacy force displays two sets of distinguishing attitudes and be-

liefs—those of our light forces and those of our heavy forces. As our transformation continues, those distinctions will blend with the birth of a force that combines the absolute best of both of these ethical systems.

We have requested that the Department of the Army approve our proposal to consolidate our infantry military occupational specialties. Tentatively targeted for 31 July 2001, the Infantry will consolidate MOSs 11H and 11M into 11B at Skill Levels 1 through 4. At Skill Level 5, MOSs 11B, 11C, 11H, and 11M will be recoded 11Z. As a result, we will initiate the most important component of the Army's Transformation and prepare for our Army an Infantry NCO corps that understands and applies all the great capabilities our Infantry brings to the battlefield.

The Infantry Center has reviewed our entire training strategy and will be prepared to execute it this summer. One-Station Unit Training will continue to present 14 weeks of training oriented on basic infantry skills, just as we have done so well for over 25 years. A new program of instruction (POI), the Bradley Transition Course, will train all sergeants (SGTs) and staff sergeants (SSGs) who are en route to mechanized units (from the light Infantry) in three weeks of turret-related skills and safety concerns. Another new course, the Antiar-

mor Leaders Course, will train soldiers in the ranks of sergeant through sergeant first class (SFC) who are new to antiarmor assignments. SFCs and master sergeants new to the mechanized Infantry will attend the proven six-week Bradley Leader's Course. Finally, Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC) and Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC) POIs in our Noncommissioned Officer Academy will cross-train NCOs on a variety of tasks across the Infantry spectrum.

Cross assignments (light to mech, mech to light) for SGTs will be based on the Army's needs. At the SSG and SFC levels, we will seek volunteers initially. Training seats in the service schools will be synchronized with the assignment process so that our noncommissioned officers, after attending training, will arrive in the units prepared to lead and train. Our commitment to the field is that the institution will prepare NCOs to lead successfully in every way possible. Each year we will conduct a detailed after-action review on this initiative.

We do not see all NCOs switching from one type of Infantry to another. Nor do we desire this. Experience has shown us that 200 to 300 NCOs each year request to move to another form of Infantry. This should meet our needs as the new Interim Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) brigades continue to come on line. We do see young soldiers moving through the ranks with past experience in more than just one form of our Infantry. They will be our future senior NCOs and leaders. They will understand the strengths and weaknesses of multiple aspects of our Branch.

That's the type of leaders we are going to build with this program. More articles will follow in future issues that highlight the specific details of our efforts.

This consolidation will be the first step toward capturing and synergizing the best qualities of all our Infantry forces in the field and molding one great capability. This step is necessary to prepare for the Objective Force and to show us the best path to take during the IBCT phase of Transformation.

Our NCOs are ready for this challenge. We have many examples of proven leaders in the ranks of our command sergeants major who have experienced multiple aspects of our Infantry. When I ask our ANCOC students how many have served in infantry positions outside of their primary skill, only between 25 and 30 percent raise their hands! Why not remove the administrative barriers and let our young soldiers re-enlist for a wider range of infantry duty stations? Today, 42 percent of our first-term infantry soldiers re-enlist for a different MOS. Often they do this because they can't get to their station of choice. We have an opportunity to make changes for the better for our soldiers and at the same time prepare for the future Army ahead of time, without having to play catch-up later.

The brigades at Fort Lewis have shown us the way with more than 400 11Ms and 11Hs in their ranks. What a shame it would be to ignore the positive signs on the way ahead. Let's get on with it! For our soldiers, our NCOs, our Army, and our nation.

